133 554 555 556 829 [476]

mans can properly be counted rich men and whatever prestige they possess is the result of their unusual supernatural powers, not their riches. The scarcity of wealth is to a marked degree the result of the belief in the equality of mankind. No justification can be found for one man having more than another, but every man is deserving of a living. Salmon is the staple food; the huge catches of this fish taken each summer at the great fish weirs are divided equally among all present, foreigners included. A man need take no part in the fishing activities to be entitled to a share in the daily distributions. Likewise the meat obtained on a hunting expedition is divided equally among all those who take part regardless of what members actually killed the game. But reward for individual initiative is not lacking. Participation in the activities of weir fishing carries distinct honors. More materially, salmon taken with a spear is the property of the individual spearman (but every man is given his turn on the fishing platform). And game taken by the individual hunter is his property. Women always retain the products of their individual labors at berry picking or root gathering. Yet it is never necessary for a person to go hungry if there is food in the village. A single meal or a whole winter's lodging and meals is never denied a man.

In the quest for supernatural power equality also plays its role. This activity is open equally to every man and every woman, not to only a privileged few as on parts of the Coast. Very few men fail to achieve at least one guardian spirit.[35]

A pointed statement by Alexander Ross indicates that similar conditions and attitudes characterized the Southern Okanogan in earlier times. "Their general maxim is, that Indians were born to be free, and that no man has a natural right to the obedience of another, except he be rich in horses and has many wives."[36] The last phrase is ambiguous: it may indicate that chiefs here were richer than the average man. Slavery is utterly unknown; class concepts are completely absent.[37]

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The Kalispel, Lakes, Spokane, and Wenatchi participate in this strong emphasis on equality, though perhaps not to the same degree as the Sanpoil and Southern Okanogan. Among all other non-peripheral groups social equality is the distinct rule for freemen, but slaves make their appearance in small numbers. On the south and west, coastal

[35] Ray, *Sanpoil and Nespelem*, pp. 25 f.
[36] Ross, *Adventures*, p. 292.
[37] Cline, *Southern Okanogan*, pp. 87, 98.